

WorkFirst High Performance Bonus

Innovative Project

2002 Nomination Form

Name of project (use separate form for each nomination): **Workshops for WorkFirst Job Seekers**

Local Planning Area: **Clark/Skamania**

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Project period (only projects operating between July 1, 2001 and June 30, 2002 will be considered): **July 1, 2001 – June 30, 2002**

An interagency committee with state and local participation will review your nomination. Please keep your submission to 3 pages of narrative -- the nomination packet must not exceed 3 pages of narrative plus the signature page. Let us know if additional materials, such as marketing tools, newspaper clippings, evaluations, etc. are available upon request. We may request this information before making a final decision on the bonus.

1.	<p>Describe your project. (This section will be scored as 25% of the total points awarded.) You may want to include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> How does this project relate to the WorkFirst performance measures? How many persons were served during SFY2002? Please list TANF and low-income persons separately. If known, what was the cost per person served including operating and administrative costs? What TANF purpose does this project address? The four purposes of TANF are on the WorkFirst website under Local Area Planning/ High Performance Bonus Awards/Expenditure Criteria at http://www.wa.gov/WORKFIRST/local/hpbacriteria.htm
	<p>DESCRIPTION</p> <p><u>Workshops for WorkFirst Job Seekers</u> provided targeted, assessable training to TANF job seekers. The skills gained in these workshops increased the job seeker's ability to appropriately apply for jobs as well as their qualifications for employment. Obviously, finding employment positively impacts TANF exits, a performance measure of WorkFirst.</p> <p>In close cooperation with ES and DSHS at the multi-agency Vancouver Town Plaza location, Clark College offered 334 free workshops that were attended by 3,057 individuals. Nearly 100% of those participants were current TANF recipients. This was achieved by highly targeted marketing to TANF recipients through flyers delivered only to LPA agency staff who directly serve TANF recipients. Approximately 690 hours of instruction were provided at a cost of less than \$10 per student. This cost estimate includes instruction, administration and space rental/lease by the college. WorkFirst Operation and Redesign funding was utilized.</p> <p>These Workshops uniquely served TANF recipients by addressing needs in both specific job preparation and personal life management skills. This was accomplished by curriculum design that incorporated content knowledge of time and money management, goal setting and decision-making into the development of applied skills on computers. For example, one workshop on Excel utilized a student exercise developing monthly household budgets; a workshop on intermediate Word skills involved students in personalizing and completing a daily and weekly schedule and task planner.</p>
2.	<p>What makes this project innovative? (This section will be scored as 50% of the total points awarded.) You may want to include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> What need was addressed and for what population? How was the project designed? What impact was desired? Was there a client focus? Employer focus? What has been learned? Did this project simplify the program or its operations? How did you measure the success of this project?

PROJECT INNOVATION

The availability of a WorkFirst funded, college owned computer lab for Pre-Employment Training students, unused several hours each day, presented an opportunity for innovation. The need for a client focused training response was evident by the low level of computer and self-management skills demonstrated by WorkFirst job seekers. Therefore, the workshop format and schedule was designed to maximize use of the lab during times of the day when WorkFirst job seekers were most often visiting the Town Plaza location. Adjunct faculty, in some cases already teaching WorkFirst clients in PET, designed curriculum and provided instruction. Over time and in response to increased awareness of best use of resources, ES WorkFirst staff and college instructors team-taught some workshops.

The desired impact of the workshops was to expand opportunities for skill development and appropriate job search participation options for TANF job seekers. In addition, and not secondarily, a purpose was to provide participants with a productive, positive learning experience in a college classroom. In addition to the specific workshop content, information and a handout was presented during each workshop that detailed other college training and education options available to WorkFirst clients. These included ABE/GED classes and GED testing information, Pre-Employment Training options, and the free tuition program for low-income working parents.

Workshop topics were chosen and changed over the course of the workshops based on agency staff and participant feedback. A monthly calendar was printed and distributed which indicated the workshop titles and times, repeating on a weekly basis. Workshop titles and topics included: "Reducing the Stress of Job Search", "Computer Basics for Job Seekers", "Using Word to Balance the Demands of Family and Job" and others.

Faculty developed curriculum designed to meet client-focused objectives. The priority of employment success was foremost in all workshops, at the same time recognizing the necessity of addressing client fears and self-doubts related to their learning and previous educational experiences. Skilled instructors adapted techniques and strategies on a daily basis to meet the skill levels and needs of their participants. Participants completed the workshops with new skills, usable products for job search and self-management, a sense of accomplishment, and formal documentation of their participation in a college training experience. Participants completed workshop evaluations that addressed the effectiveness of the content and the instruction, among other topics. Evaluation comments consistently revealed the accomplishment of objectives.

Frequent comments included:

"The class covered all of the basics I needed to know to work the computer."

"I liked that it was hands-on training."

"I learned some computer terms and jargon."

"The pace of the class was great."

"The class was fun."

"The class was too short."

"I learned how to write a resume."

"I learned how to post my resume online."

"I found out some good web-sites to go to for job searching."

"I now have some computer skills that will enable me to get a job."

Workshops for WorkFirst Job Seekers validated WorkFirst job seeker attitude and interest level in training. Initially apprehension was high. It was learned that taking participants to the classroom for their first workshop, resulted in higher attendance in not only that workshop, but also in additional workshops that they chose to attend later. Participant evaluation of the workshops was positive in either case. Participant performance levels supported the need for such training. Adaptations by faculty were common to adjust to skill levels of participants. Agency staff and faculty, common to WorkFirst efforts, further developed the level of communication and coordination among themselves.

This project was a demonstration of efficiency of time, space and resources for the benefit of the WorkFirst job seeker. It evidenced the high level of cooperation and integration of services that is possible within WorkFirst efforts.

3.	<p>Partnerships. (This section will be scored as 25% of the total points awarded.) You may want to include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What partners were involved in the design of this project? • What partners supported this program in ways that contributed to its success? • Did you bring in new partners for this project? • Did you add new resources—funds, person power, other-in-kind contributions? • Did this project strengthen existing partnerships?
	<p>PARTNERSHIPS</p> <p>Staff representing a majority of the LPA partners came together to design the response to this opportunity for innovation. Mandatory partners and other WorkFirst contractors, including front line staff of those agencies, met to develop the initial plan for the workshops. College WorkFirst management facilitated the process and decision-making. Input and feedback continued formally and informally throughout the year.</p> <p>WorkFirst partners included Clark College, the Columbia River CSO, Employment Security, Partners in Careers, Vancouver Housing Authority, Child Care Resource and Referral, Columbia River Mental Health, various contractors such as Rainier Case Management, SCA Pacific, and others. As the workshops became known other community partners, such as Clark County Community Services, referred participants. Care was taken to insure that WorkFirst clients were targeted and the monthly calendar of workshops was not made available to the general public.</p> <p>Contributions that were added included the use of a computer lab and staff/trainer time as resources were optimized with the Employment Security WorkFirst unit. LPA partners did additional, informal word-of-mouth marketing as they shared flyers and positive feedback with other TANF targeted, community agency staff.</p> <p>The Workshops for WorkFirst Job Seekers clearly strengthened existing LPA partnerships.</p>

Are additional materials available upon request? ☒ Yes ☐ No

Please email this form and mail or FAX an additional page with the signatures of the mandatory partners in your Local Planning Area. All partners must agree to nominate this project.

Nominations are due by 5:00 p.m., Tuesday, October 15, 2002 to:

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